

March 25, 2020 Memo

To: Speaker Householder, Minority Leader Sykes, Senate President Obhof, Minority Leader Kenny Yuko, all members of the Ohio General Assembly
CC: Statehouse Press Corps
RE: Opposition to Senate Bill 294 and minimum acceptable steps to ensure every eligible Ohioan can successfully cast a ballot
From: ACLU of Ohio, All Voting is Local, Common Cause Ohio, Faith in Public Life, League of Women Voters of Ohio, Ohio A. Philip Randolph Institute, Ohio Council of Churches, Ohio Student Association, Ohio Votes

We recognize that there is not a perfect way to conduct an election during a global pandemic, but we will not support any proposal that doesn't include the following:

- A final Primary Election Day that allows as much time as possible for voters to participate in Ohio's cumbersome, inefficient vote-by-mail process, while also respecting communities that have levies/issues on the ballot. April 28 is an unacceptable, unworkable date for the primary. At the earliest, we suggest mid May.
- An extended voter registration deadline to continue until 30 days prior to the final Primary Election Day.
- A fully funded vote-by-mail system with pre-paid postage for voters to return absentee ballot requests and absentee ballots.
- Removal of barriers to Ohio's current vote-by-mail system that disenfranchises countless Ohioans every election: abandon rigid, unscientific signature matching protocols; require Boards of Elections to call/email voters to resolve minor clerical errors, if that contact info is available; and count all ballots received up to ten days after Election Day, if there is a postmark on/before Election Day or if no postmark is present.
- Reduction in processing time for absentee ballot requests by providing funding for BOEs to secure temporary staff.
- Options for in-person voting, such as extended early voting or in-person voting by appointment.
- An extensive state-sponsored education campaign to make sure Ohio voters have the information they need to vote by mail and have their votes properly counted.

In this unprecedented situation, it is critical to balance the needs of various communities and stakeholders. We've set forth the policy conditions that we think provide the best opportunity to participate in this Primary Election Day in a safe, secure, and accessible manner.